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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2947
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 2483
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0500
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/12/2028

TAGS: PREL PTER MARR EC CO VE

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CORREA

REF: A. QUITO 216
1B. QUITO 228

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Jewell for reasons 1.4 (d).

11. (C) Summary: Meeting with the Ambassador on March 12, President Correa made clear that he wanted to continue working with the United States, including in Ecuador's northern border region. He again vehemently denied an inappropriate relationship with the FARC, saying that would not be in his interest. The Ambassador offered assurances that the Manta FOL was not involved in supporting the Colombian incursion and provided information on the Embraer Super Tucano to dispel suggestions it was not capable of carrying out the Colombian operation. Correa was unsure what to expect out of the March 17 OAS ministerial meeting. (End Summary)

12. (C) President Correa quickly responded to the Ambassador's request for a meeting, scheduling it for 12:30 pm March 12, his first day back in the office following his Chile trip. The meeting was one-on-one. Correa appeared more relaxed than he had at their March 3 meeting (Ref A). The Ambassador told Correa she was there to see where we are and what type of relationship with the United States he wanted going forward. She pointed out that many in his Administration are waiting for a signal from Correa on how to treat the United States.

13. (C) Correa assured her that he wanted to continue working with the United States, noting that he likes the U.S. and has many ties with us. However, he reiterated his disappointment in the USG stance on the Colombian incursion. Specifically, Correa expressed concern about continued Department comments on Ecuador's relationship with the FARC. He again vehemently denied any inappropriate relationship, saying that he had never met a FARC member and that there would be no benefit for him in establishing such a relationship. Correa said it was not that he was tolerating the FARC or letting it stay in Ecuador, nor had he ever thought of inviting the FARC Secretariat to Quito. He stressed that such actions would

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not be in his interest. Correa recognized that the FARC was at war with the democratically-elected government of Colombia, and that it could well come after his government next. Correa said he wanted to continue working with the U.S. in the Northern Border region, and lamented the limits

to the resources and personnel Ecuador could afford. He cited the pathetic, even humiliating, fact that the Ecuadorian army did not have a working helicopter to quickly mobilize to the scene, and that the radar system for the zone was inoperable.

¶4. (C) Correa criticized Colombia, saying he could never sanction the execution of wounded individuals, as he believed the Colombian military did in the Reyes camp. He expressed appreciation for Chavez' solidarity, but emphasized that "we (Ecuadorians) are different ('somos otra cosa.')" Asked what he expected from the OAS ministerial, Correa was uncertain what would come out of it.

¶5. (C) Correa said the problem for him was that it was difficult for him to prove a negative, that he had no ties with the FARC. The Ambassador said we have the same problem with proving that the Forward Operating Location (FOL) in Manta had nothing to do with the Colombian military operation. She provided information showing that Colombia's Super Tucano aircraft, with modifications, could have accomplished the Colombian attack. Correa promised to share the info with the OAS since he had suggested to the delegation, based on reports from his own staff, that the Colombian aircraft would not have been capable.

¶6. (S) Comment: Correa was clearly still unhappy with the USG. However, he did not sound like he was ready to give up on a constructive relationship with us, and seemed to appreciate the Ambassador asking to see him. He said he favored FM Salvador having a meeting with the Deputy Secretary on the margins of next week's OAS ministerial, if

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it could be arranged. Correa's denial of an inappropriate relationship with the FARC appeared sincere. It is unclear to us whether Correa knew everything that Minister Larrea put on the table in his discussions with the FARC, or whether Larrea might have been pursuing, at least in part, a personal agenda. Winners and losers among Correa's jockeying inner circle of advisors in the wake of this event remain to be seen, as well as possible broader internal policy and personnel fallout. Correa's actions in the coming days are likely to be telling.

Jewell